

# Article By Dr. Emily Austin - "Epicurus And The Politics Of The Fear Of Death"

Post by "Cassius" of December 10, 2025 at 8:18 AM

That's a great catch Pacatus thank you! I do not recall that we have discussed this or in my case that I was aware of it at all.

I see the download watermark says 2013 so I presume it's at last that old but I can't really confirm the date of publication from the PDF.

At first glance and before reading the whole thing the parts I have skimmed strike me as very good. Her interpretations of Epicurus are reasonable here as they are in her book - she seems to be saying that Epicurus does not demand total absence of pain and that he realizes that some fear of death is inevitable and even useful.

If that's her position then this should prove to be a very useful addition to arguments that Epicurus should not be interpreted as setting up a neo-mystical state of "total elimination of all pain" as his goal.

Rather, as to death and everything else, he's focused on a practical view of happiness seen as a practical balance of pleasure over pain in which we are happy even as we inevitably, and sometimes voluntarily, experience some pain.

## Quote

I have argued that Epicurus does not believe all forms of the fear of death are irrational and eliminable. At least one fear – the fear of violent death caused by others – is brute and must be managed politically. If I am right, Epicurus' beliefs would seem much more reasonable to many people who recognize that we have a vested interest in controlling the fear of death, but who are skeptical about our ability to eliminate it. Epicurus would no longer believe that a person can study a set of arguments, believe them, chant them regularly to herself or with friends, and thereby rid herself of the many varieties of the fear of death. Others, however, might think my thesis renders Epicurus' beliefs about the fear of death much less exciting. If one is primarily interested in Epicurus' views on death because his extremism makes him a useful foil, then he might no longer be the biggest target. Likewise, if one looks to Epicurus to eliminate all varieties of one's own fear of death, then one might need to seek extra assistance.

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